

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY AF/E:RBRESLER /WBCOOTE:CRJ

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L/AF:MR. HUFFMAN (IN DRAFT)

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R 040148Z JUL 74

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 144854

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:CASC MA

SUBJECT: W/W REPPAS

REFS: (A) TANANARIVE 0459; (B) TANANARIVE 0883

1. DEPT OFFICER DISCUSSED LATEST DEVELOPMENTS AS REPORTED REF (B) WITH JEFFRIES. MRS. BURGEAT HAD INFORMED HIM OF THE ALLEGED NEED TO PAY BRIBE, BUT SHE HAD SAID BRIBE WAS TO BE SHARED BETWEEN PROCUREUR GENERAL, HEAD OF APPEALS COURT AND MINISTER OF JUSTICE. OBVIOUSLY, HOWEVER, AS DCM TOLD BURGEAT, USG WOULD NOT BE INVOLVED IN ANY WAY IN ANY BRIBERY SCHEME.

2. WE AGREE FULLY WITH EMBASSY THAT WHETHER BURGEAT BRIBE STORY IS OR IS NOT TRUE, IT WOULD BE TIMELY TO MAKE FORMAL APPROACH TO TOP LEVEL OF GOMR. EMBASSY IS CORRECT IN ASSUMING THIS IS NOT MATTER IN WHICH - WOULD WISH TO INVOLVE HIGHEST U.S. LEVEL DIRECTLY. NOR DO WE BELIEVE THAT WE SHOULD ATTEMPT INVOLVE ATTORNEY GENERAL, AT LEAST AT THIS TIME. INSTEAD DEPT BELIEVES BEST APPROACH WOULD BE FOR
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AMBASSADOR TO SEEK MEETING WITH HEAD OF GOVERNMENT

RAMANANTSOA ON USG'S INSTRUCTION.

3. SUBJECT YOUR CONCURRENCE YOU SHOULD PROCEED TO ARRANGE MEETING WITH RAMANANTSOA AT WHICH YOU SHOULD MAKE FOLLOWING POINTS WHICH ARE SIMILAR TO THOSE MADE IN YOUR EARLIER APPROACH TO GENERAL ANDRIANADA (REF A):

(A) WE DO NOT DISPUTE RIGHT OF GOMR TO TRY REPPAS.

(B) WHEN REPPAS WAS FIRST SENTENCED THERE WAS A FLURRY OF PUBLICITY AND CONCERN IN THE UNITED STATES. SEVERAL CONGRESSMEN AND SENATORS INQUIRED ABOUT THE CASE, AND PRESS INTEREST WAS HIGH. REPPAS' FAMILY SO FAR HAS REFRAINED FROM STIRRING UP CONGRESSIONAL OR PRESS CRITICISM AND ACTIVITY RE EXTENSION OF REPPAS' SENTENCE AND INCREASE OF HIS FINE. IN THE UNITED STATES SENTENCES CAN NEVER BE INCREASED UPON APPEAL. SHOULD THE APPELLATE COURT DECISION BECOME PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE, WE CAN EXPECT MUCH MORE EXTENSIVE AND ADVERSE PRESS COMMENTARY. THIS IN TURN COULD STIMULATE AN UNFAVORABLE CONGRESSIONAL REACTION, PERHAPS TO THE DETRIMENT OF CONTINUING GOOD U.S.-MALAGASY RELATIONS, WHICH WE BOTH VALUE. WE DO NOT WISH TO PRESSURE THE GOMR, BUT MAKE THE ABOVE POINTS ONLY TO ENSURE AWARENESS OF THE POSSIBILITY OF TROUBLE IF REPPAS REMAINS IN JAIL.

(C) EMBASSY HAS NOTED THAT REPPAS' MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH HAVE DETERIORATED IN THE LAST YEAR. WE HOPE THAT HE CAN BE RELEASED WHILE IT IS STILL POSSIBLE FOR HIM TO RECOVER HIS HEALTH.

(D) REPPAS' AGING MOTHER IS IN POOR HEALTH. SHE CONSTANTLY WORRIES ABOUT HIM. THE FAMILY IS CONCERNED THAT IF SHE DISCOVERS THAT HIS SENTENCE HAS BEEN INCREASED IT WILL HAVE A VERY SERIOUS EFFECT ON HER HEALTH. IN LIGHT OF HIS MOTHER'S DECLINING HEALTH WE ARE AFRAID THAT HE MIGHT BE DENIED THE OPPORTUNITY TO SEE HER AGAIN IN HER FINAL MONTHS IF HE IS NOT RELEASED SOON.

(E) REPPAS HAS ALREADY SUFFERED MUCH. HE INVESTED
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SEVERAL YEARS AND HIS ENTIRE PERSONAL FORTUNE IN AGM-VIANDE, ALL OF WHICH HE HAS NOW LOST.

(F) FOR HUMANITARIAN REASONS AND IN THE INTEREST OF PRESERVING OUR GOOD BILATERAL RELATIONS USG HOPES THAT THE GOMR WILL CONSIDER RELEASING REPPAS IN THE NEAR FUTURE. SISCO

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